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THE JANITOR'S BOY  
AND OTHER POEMS







Marceau

Nathalia Clara Ruth Crane

# The Janitor's Boy

AND OTHER POEMS

by

*Nathalia Crane*



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*Foreword, by*  
WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT

*Nathalia at Ten, by*  
NUNNALLY JOHNSON

*Afterword, by*  
EDMUND LEAMY



TO  
MY MOTHER



## CONTENTS

	PAGE
FOREWORD, by William Rose Benét . . . . .	xi
NATHALIA AT TEN, by Nunnally Johnson . . . . .	xv
THE JANITOR'S BOY . . . . .	3
OH, ROGER JONES . . . . .	4
THE FLATHOUSE ROOF . . . . .	5
JOHN PAUL JONES . . . . .	7
THE ROVERS . . . . .	9
THE VACANT LOT . . . . .	11
THE SWINGING STAIR . . . . .	13
THE VESTAL . . . . .	15
THE BLIND GIRL . . . . .	17
PRESCIENCE . . . . .	18
LOVE . . . . .	20
WHAT EVERY GIRL KNOWS . . . . .	21
JEALOUSY . . . . .	22
MOTHER'S BONNET . . . . .	24
THE RAG BAG . . . . .	25
THE FIRST SNOW STORM . . . . .	26
SUFFERING . . . . .	27
THE MAP MAKERS . . . . .	28
DIANA . . . . .	29
THE READING BOY . . . . .	31
THE BATTLE ON THE FLOOR . . . . .	32
MID-DAY AT TRINITY . . . . .	35
CASTLE "BILL" . . . . .	36
CASTLE WILLIAM . . . . .	38
THE ROLL OF THE ROSES . . . . .	39
THE GOSSIPERS . . . . .	40
TOMORROW . . . . .	41
THE ROSE OF REST . . . . .	42
THE SYMBOLS . . . . .	43
THE SALAMANDER ISLES . . . . .	44

THE CHESS GAME . . . . .	46
THE DINOSAURS' EGGS . . . . .	48
THE FIRST STORY . . . . .	49
THE THREE-CORNERED LOT . . . . .	50
THE HISTORY OF HONEY . . . . .	53
THE HISTORY OF PAINTING . . . . .	55
THE ROAD TO ROSLYN . . . . .	57
THE ARMY LAUNDRESS . . . . .	59
REGINA MENDOSENA . . . . .	61
THE GIRL FROM SOAPSUDS ROW . . . . .	63
EVA . . . . .	66
OLD MAID'S REVERIE . . . . .	68
THE COMMONPLACE . . . . .	69
BERKLEY COMMON . . . . .	70
CHOICE . . . . .	71
THE FIRE VASE . . . . .	72
MY HUSBANDS . . . . .	73
AFTERWORD, by Edmund Leamy . . . . .	75

## FOREWORD

WHEN I took the two poems from Nathalia's mother, and promised to read them, I had seen none of the press notices of Miss Crane's talent. Being only a quasi-journalist I seldom read the newspapers. I am extremely skeptical of infant prodigies, and the poems of Nathalia's that I have since seen most quoted in newspaper articles about her are just what you would expect. They prove nothing except that she is a little girl with a lively fancy. Certain poems in this first collection, however, seem to me to prove something more.

Some long time ago in Scotland there was a little girl named Marjorie Fleming, and to-day a twelve-year-old, Helen Douglas Adam, the daughter of a Scotch parson and his wife of Dundee, is her successor overseas to the juvenile purple. Miss Adam has now been published both in England and America. Yet the best poems of hers that I have read do not seem to me to possess such individuality or such maturity of melody and diction as Miss Crane's best poems. Then there is our own Hilda Conkling, whose mother is a distinguished American poet, and who writes in free verse and has published several volumes of poems. Hilda is a real poet. But she has never grappled with and conquered certain problems of poetic structure from which Miss Crane, by sheer instinct, seems to have wrested occasional victory.

I took the two poems from Nathalia's mother; and first I read *The Blind Girl*. I came upon the two verses:

In the darkness who would answer for the color of a rose,  
Or the vestments of the May moth and the pilgrimage it goes?

\* \* \*

Oh, night, thy soothing prophecies companion all our ways,  
Until releasing hands let fall the catalogue of days.

These lines and the meditation from which they spring were the spontaneous phrasing and the natural meditation of—a child of ten. That in itself, I think, is sufficiently remarkable.

In the darkness who would cavil at the question of a line,  
Since the darkness holds all loveliness beyond the mere design.

Strange insight for a comparative infant!

In her lighter moments—and, naturally, there are a great many—Nathalia's “heart is all a-flutter like the washing on the line”; she “could not stain romance with monetary fee”; and, when she has sat upon a bumble-bee, she knows “the tenseness of humiliating pain.” Many a grown humorist might envy the freshness of such amusing phrases.

There is much laughter and nonsense in this book—that of a rather romantic little girl with a quick eye and ear and a pert fancy. But there is, as I have intimated, more than that.

Cloud-made mountains towered  
Beckoning to me;  
Visionary triremes  
Talked about the sea.

There were strings of camels  
On the Tunis sands.  
There were certain cities  
Holding out their hands.

Here the thing we call poetry asserts itself. The instinct for remarkable phrase and striking figurative expression is either inborn or it is not. Facility with rhyme and metre is not nearly so remarkable. But when a child can write, as in the poem *My Husbands*,

I hear in soft recession  
The praise they give to me;  
I hear them chant my titles  
From all antiquity

it is almost uncanny. Here is, if you like, a somewhat derivative diction, but here also is true poetry by every test:

He showed me like a master  
That one rose makes a gown:  
That looking up to Heaven  
Is merely looking down.

Well, I not only wonder how she has learned simple finality of phrase so quickly; I also wonder whether she can possibly realize the philosophical implications of her best poems.

As for imagery, Nathalia's angels hearing "the hurdy-gurdies in the Candle-Maker's Row" is an example of her fancy that quickens into imagination. She sees the Oriental bees flying "in golden convoys to the mountains of the moon," she quizzically presents the pathos of *The Dinosaurs' Eggs*; she has "steered by stars that sorrowed, with the moonlight in our wake"; she sees Berkley Common

Like a manuscript, all yellow, and with many things deleted,  
Yet a manuscript completed, with embellishments most rare,  
Berkley Common lies forgotten, with its fields of everlasting,  
And the sunlight on the windows of the empty houses there.

As to exactly what she is trying to say in *The Symbols*, I am in doubt, but it is hard to forget the Talmud stalking like a rabbi in a gown.

On the one hand, with Nathalia, we have simply a rhyming gift turned to amusing descriptions of certain fairly ordinary episodes and characteristics of life that interest every healthily alert young lady. On the other hand, we have the beginnings of a poet with a true ear for rhythm, an eye for the color of words, and a fancy that often rises into the realm of imagination. I only hope that the young lady will continue to enjoy all the ordinary incidents of her existence as much as she has heretofore, and to perfect her technique in her spare moments. It needs perfecting. It is hardly to be wondered at that her work is still in the experimental stage.

She is not yet "the youngest of the seers," nor yet "released from fetters of ancestral pose," but there is undoubtedly conquest of poetic beauty "waiting down the years" for her—"revisions of the ruby and the rose," as she puts it. Read the first two verses of *The Vestal* and marvel that a young lady of Nathalia's age should be able to master without effort such a perfectly Emily Dickinsonian idiom. This is no copy; it is something that even Emily Dickinson would not have been at all ashamed to have written. And that is a good deal to say.

Now as to prophecies, who can make them? Frankly, I have not the slightest idea how Miss Crane's gift may develop. I only know that she has given signs of astonishing precocity as a young poet. Her parents have wisdom and they will see that she is not spoiled. Her gifts will simply develop according to her experience of literature and her experience of life. It is a very ticklish thing to endeavor in any way to direct so young a gift. It will find by instinct its own nourishment; that is my belief.

Meanwhile, to Nathalia, good luck on the difficult road!

WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT

*New York City, May, 1924.*

## NATHALIA AT TEN

NATHALIA's day is today. All of Time that is past, from the birth of those odd old folk, the troglodytes, about which she has ruminated so pleasantly, up to and through the final scene of the latest Broadway moving picture is, to her, a harvested crop—important in its way but no longer interesting. And as for tomorrow and the next year, they will have their turn presently. It is today . . .

This extract from Nathalia's as yet unarticulated philosophy is offered by way of information for those who are instinctively inclined to be harsh, on general principles, with a talent that springs, a little too boldly perhaps, ahead of its years.

Nathalia had been writing her verse for several months before Mr. and Mrs. Crane came across it, writing it without fuss or excitement and storing it in a small and private album, content apparently with the reward of whatever pleasure the rereading of it gave her. If she had, even secretly, any concern with such a vanity as applause, she certainly did not betray it. And when shortly before Christmas of 1922, the little girl mailed some of her poems to a Brooklyn newspaper and received immediate acknowledgment from the editor, her parents were as much astonished as, later on, was the editor of a newspaper when, after having accepted a number of poems signed Nathalia Crane, the author herself walked into the office and proved to be a mite of a human being.

I was one of the file reporters that trailed into Nathalia's home the morning after her first publication, bent less on nourishing and encouraging a young artist than on getting a

human-interest story. It was a file that eventually included generous, vociferous, and indiscriminate eulogists, a file that threatened to demoralize or spoil whatever young talents Nathalia had.

Those kind-hearted newspaper folks showered her with a shocking amount of almost unqualified praise, some of it accurately placed but most of it merely blank fire. This would have been very bad for her but for one thing—Nathalia never read any of it.

And so, unaffected, she maintained the same tenor of her young days, playing with her dolls when she pleased and retiring to her boudoir to make rhythms when she pleased. She has always written, and still does write, only when the fancy prompts her.

What Nathalia has written is the kind of thing that she can write, whatever its merits or demerits. She has measured it against no other verse, youthful or adult. The inspiration for most of it comes from books she has read, which are mainly romantic in character. As for the rest, it happens that she is an extraordinarily articulate little girl, and if in some cases the conceits and fancies which she crystallizes are no rarer than those that, in all probability, throng the mysterious mind of every imaginative child, the explanation is simply that she is able to utter and clarify them, and these other children are, for the most part, normally unable to do that. That also they have, in Nathalia's case, taken the form of mature work, as evidenced, in one way, by the fact that editors published her contributions for several months before learning that she was so much below the accepted age for serious consideration, is, I believe, another mark of her high singularity.

Others, unfortunately, will be less easily satisfied. A cynicism concerning the future careers of precocious children is one of the rigid fundamentals of nearly every mind. It has, no doubt, a valid basis. But, for that reason, Nathalia's future, probably very dark in popular prospect, threatens to shade her present. That is why I offered at the outset, as

a point of information, the comment on Nathalia's general attitude toward life. Nathalia, I am sure, sees no reason why anybody else should read these poems with an eye any further ahead in time than this afternoon's sunset. She is content to leave the verdict, so far as posterity is concerned, to her own grandchildren.

NUNNALLY JOHNSON

*Brooklyn, N. Y., May, 1924.*



THE JANITOR'S BOY  
AND OTHER POEMS



## THE JANITOR'S BOY

Oh I'm in love with the janitor's boy,  
And the janitor's boy loves me;  
He's going to hunt for a desert isle  
In our geography.

A desert isle with spicy trees  
Somewhere near Sheepshead Bay;  
A right nice place, just fit for two,  
Where we can live alway.

Oh I'm in love with the janitor's boy,  
He's busy as he can be;  
And down in the cellar he's making a raft  
Out of an old settee.

He'll carry me off, I know that he will,  
For his hair is exceedingly red;  
And the only thing that occurs to me  
Is to dutifully shiver in bed.

The day that we sail, I shall leave this brief note,  
For my parents I hate to annoy:  
"I have flown away to an isle in the bay  
With the janitor's red-haired boy."

## OH, ROGER JONES

OH, Roger Jones! Oh, Roger Jones!  
Oh, Prince! O, Knight! Ah me!  
We used to play at keeping house,  
Beneath an old oak tree.

Your hair was red, your eyes were brown,  
You had a freckled nose;  
You were the father of my dolls,  
My husband—I suppose.

Oh, Roger! You were only nine,  
And I was half-past eight;  
It really was romantic, or  
As good, at any rate.

## THE FLATHOUSE ROOF

I LINGER on the flathouse roof, the moonlight is divine.  
But my heart is all a-flutter like the washing on the line.

I long to be a heroine, I long to be serene,  
But my feet, they dance in answer to a distant tam-  
bourine.

And, oh! the dreams of ecstasy. Oh! Babylon and  
Troy!

I've a hero in the basement, he's the janitor's red-haired  
boy.

There's the music of his mallet and the jigging of his  
saw;

I wonder what he's making on that lovely cellar floor?

He loves me, for he said it when we met upon the stair,  
And that is why I'm on the roof to get a breath of air.

He said it! Oh! He said it! And the only thing I  
said

Was, "Roger Jones, I like you, for your hair is very  
red."

We parted when intruders came a-tramping through  
the hall;

He's got my pocket handkerchief and I have got his  
ball.

And so it is I'm on the roof. Oh! Babylon and Troy!  
I'm very sure that I'm in love with someone else's boy.

Alone, upon the starry heights, I'm dancing on a green,  
To the jingling and the jangling of a distant tam-  
bourine,

To the stamping of a hammer and the jigging of a saw,  
And the secret sort of feeling I'm in love forever more.

Do you think it's any wonder, with the moonlight so  
divine,  
That my heart is all a-flutter, like the washing on the  
line?

## JOHN PAUL JONES

'Tis John Paul Jones—the janitor's boy,  
He lives on the gun-deck floor,  
Where all of the windows are action ports,  
And the dumbwaiters rattle and roar.

The old trash tins are our hand grenades,  
And the rugs on the backyard lines  
Are the mains of the Britisher Serapis  
That we fight with our bursting "Nines."

'Tis John Paul Jones—my Admiral;  
His hair is a glorious red;  
And I am the maiden who serves as the mate  
To see that the sawdust is spread.

He leans on the rail of the laundry tubs  
As the Serapis lifts on our lee;  
Our gun crews chant by the carriónades  
And the powder boys yell in their glee.

For he who stands in Colonial rags,  
Is born to the gift of the game—  
Of shaking the dust from a Serapis,  
Or the dust from the halls of fame.

I whirl the wheel of the wash machine  
In the spray of a soap-suds sea;  
But I know in my heart that the daring Jones  
Is winning the fight for me.

And I think it is sweet of John Paul Jones,  
In playing the good old game,  
To do all the fighting just for love—  
With never a thought of fame.

## THE ROVERS

“Oh, wilt thou go a-sailing,” said the janitor’s boy to me.

“It’s raining, but I’ve got a raft rigged with a canopy.

“We carry boisterous batteries, our cannon balls are stones,

But I’ll wager all your loveliness you’re safe with John Paul Jones.”

I asked him very faintly was he competent to steer?  
He said he was authority on rafts and running gear.

Then suddenly his voice sank low to slow and gentle tones,

And off I went a-sailing with my captain, John Paul Jones.

We drifted down the avenue that was our sweep of sea,  
And never man or mermaid any happier than we.

We paused beside a paradise depicted on a sign;  
We moored fast to the margin of its crimson border line.

We slipped our surf-filled sandals off, we waded to the knee,

And when I felt like swooning John Paul Jones supported me.

The darkness hesitated, fearing we might lose our way;  
We counted all the street lamps 'ere we homeward  
sought to stray.

We counted corner lanterns, and the understanding  
stars  
Saw we were linked by longings for the shining shell-  
strewn bars,

For the realms reserved for rovers, for the rafts and  
painted signs,  
And the right to moor to ring-heads in the far-off  
border lines.

## THE VACANT LOT

THEY'RE going to build a flathouse on the lot next door  
to me;

And Roger Jones, the janitor's boy, is mad as he can be.

That lot was like a tropic isle, with weeds and rubbish  
fair,

The rusty cans and coffee pots, that looked like Roger's  
hair.

'Twas oft we strolled among the weeds, we were in  
love, you see,

And Roger Jones was going to build a bungalow for  
me.

We used to rest upon a rock just where the weeds were  
tall;

We were engaged, I think, until the builders spoiled it  
all.

But now they've ruined Roger's plans, they've dug up  
all the lot;

With all the brick and mortar round, you'd never know  
the spot.

They came with carts and horses; tore our wilderness  
apart;

No wonder Roger Jones was wild; it nearly broke *my*  
heart.

We could have done some wondrous things if time were  
not so slow;  
The weeds, they might have grown to trees, fit for a  
bungalow.

With rusty cans and broken glass, we'd planned a home  
so nice;  
But they dumped their brick and mortar in our little  
paradise.

They dumped their brick and mortar 'mid the smoky  
lakes of lime,  
Yet we won't forget, 'twas Eden—Eden, once upon a  
time.

Eden, where we dreamed supremely—rusty can and  
coffee pot;  
Eden, with the weeds and rubbish, in a vacant city lot.

And now, we're simply waiting, oh, that janitor's boy  
and me,  
Until the janitor's boy grows up and finds himself quite  
free

To just discover areas where builders never go,  
Where we may live forever in a little bungalow.

## THE SWINGING STAIR

FROM the flotsam of a city street we built the Swinging  
Stair,  
And latitude, or longitude, the least of all our care.

A tilting board—an orange crate—the sparrows  
screamed with glee,  
As we swung to port and starboard like a lugger on the  
sea.

We cruised without a compass, but with merchandise of  
worth,  
To barter pins and needles at the portals of the Earth.

The helmsman was my hero brave, his hair as red could  
be;  
Perhaps he was the janitor's boy, but he belonged to  
me;

He was mine because I made him master of the Swing-  
ing Stair,  
And because I liked the color of his very auburn hair.

The surf upon the sandbars called the price of sugar  
cane:  
It was mounting every moment down upon the Spanish  
Main.

The trades were in the topsails, in the scuppers raced  
the foam,  
But never did we get beyond the gateway of our home.

We have notions that the motions of a lugger 'neath a  
tree

Do not exactly tally with the leagues she makes at sea;

Yet the glory of the ocean lies in no far distant goal,  
But reflections in the water, and the port to starboard  
roll.

## THE VESTAL

ONCE a pallid vestal  
Doubted truth in blue;  
Listed red as ruin,  
Harried every hue;

Barricaded vision,  
Garbed herself in sighs;  
Ridiculed the birth marks  
Of the butterflies.

Dormant and disdainful,  
Never could she see  
Why the golden powder  
Decorates the bee;

Why a summer pasture  
Lends itself to paint;  
Why love unappareled  
Still remains the saint.

Finally she faltered;  
Saw at last, forsooth,  
Every gaudy color  
Is a bit of truth.

Then the gates were opened;  
Miracles were seen;  
That instructed damsel  
Donned a gown of green;

Wore it in a churchyard,  
All arrayed with care;  
And a painted rainbow  
Shone above her there.

## THE BLIND GIRL

IN the darkness, who would answer for the color of a  
rose,

Or the vestments of the May moth and the pilgrimage  
it goes?

In the darkness who would answer, in the darkness who  
would care,

If the odor of the roses and the winged things were  
there.

In the darkness who would cavil o'er the question of a  
line,

Since the darkness holds all loveliness, beyond the mere  
design.

Oh night, thy soothing prophecies companion all our  
ways,

Until releasing hands let fall the catalogue of days.

In the darkness, who would answer for the color of a  
rose,

Or the vestments of the May moth and the pilgrimage  
it goes?

In the darkness who would answer, in the darkness who  
would care,

If the odor of the roses and the better things were  
there.

## PRESCIENCE

A PRECIOUS place is Paradise and none may know its  
worth,  
But Eden ever longeth for the knickknacks of the earth.

The angels grow quite wistful over worldly things  
below;  
They hear the hurdy-gurdies in the Candle Maker's  
Row.

They listen for the laughter from the attics of the  
earth;  
They lower pails from heaven's walls to catch the milk-  
maids' mirth.

By turns they scan the shadow of the dial on the wall,  
The rams' heads of that drawbridge never lowered  
since the fall.

They sway with sweet misgivings, that on rising some-  
what late  
They may hear unusual noises by the battlemented  
gate,

See warders at each windlass, every rusty chain a-cry;  
See a ponderous portcullis rise, a drawbridge downward  
fly.

Perchance some summer morning and with no one on  
the wall,  
The warders may get orders and the drawbridge swiftly  
fall.

A wingless one may be the first to stumble on the scene  
And vision earth and heaven, with a rustic bridge be-  
tween.

## LOVE

Now Marjory is seven years,  
And I am nine and more.  
We went a-strolling after cream  
Into a Flatbush store.

The handsome clerk said "Ladies, yes,  
I'll serve you with a rush."  
He looked so very scrumptious that  
We both began to blush.

He smiled at us, we smiled at him.  
And then we went away:  
We were so captivated, yes,  
That we forgot to pay.

Of course we could have sauntered back,  
And settled, don't you see,  
But oh, we could not stain romance  
With monetary fee.

## WHAT EVERY GIRL KNOWS

IN my bedroom, in my boudoir,  
There's a box I ope no more;  
It is packed with all my treasures  
From the ten cent store.

Saturday, a longing seizes—  
Grips me so I scarce can speak,  
And I ask for my allowance,  
Mostly thirty cents a week.

Then I call on Margie Lynam,  
And we hasten from the door;  
And we go inspecting counters  
In the ten cent store.

We get flushed most every visit  
When we lay our money down;  
There are no expert advisors—  
Mr. Woolworth's out of town.

Homeward, purchases we carry,  
And examine them with care;  
Then we pile them in the play-box,  
And we always leave them there.

Riches never will be ours,  
We have said it o'er and o'er,  
Till they make things all "One Dollar"  
In the ten cent store.

## JEALOUSY

FLATBUSH! Flatbush! Rah! Rah! Rah!

See the bobbed-head riding  
On the bob-tailed car.

Flatbush! Flatbush! Rah! Rah! Rah!

I saw a big girl staring at my Pa.

She was standing in the corner, she was turning in her  
toes.

She must have been a senior—by the powder on her  
nose.

Her hair was bobbed and blond-like and she was some-  
one's pet,

But I went into action with the battlefield all set.

Rah! Rah! Flatbush! My mother wasn't there,  
But some papas are rather young and need a daughter's  
care.

And that is why in Flatbush we have organized a guard,  
Made up of little daughters of the men who work so  
hard.

Some day, of course, I will mature and know a little  
more,

But now I am content to be my mother's Signal Corps.

And mother knows when I go out with Pa, things are  
O. K.,

For I belong to the Flatbush Guards—we don't let  
father stray.

Flatbush! Flatbush! Rah! Rah! Rah!  
I hold on to father's hand  
When we go very far.  
Flatbush! Flatbush! Rah! Rah! Rah!  
See the bobbed-head riding on the bob-tailed car.

## MOTHER'S BONNET

THIS is her bonnet, with ribbons arrayed,  
Clearly a calico ambuscade;  
It dates from the days of the bricks of straw—  
This is the bonnet my mother wore.

This is the bonnet my mother donned  
When she walked with a youth by Plymouth Pond;  
'Twas the night she wore her beads of jade,  
And father fell into the ambuscade.

This is the bonnet I found in a chest,  
Daisies and bows in a lavender nest;  
It looks like the plumes the Persians wore,  
But it must have had wonderful power to draw.

## THE RAG BAG

WHEN we went down to grandma's  
To visit our dearest kin,  
We asked for grandma's rag bag  
That hangs in the garret bin.

Oh, grandma's frugal minded  
From an old New England day,  
But you ought to see that rag bag  
And the things she threw away.

There were gloves that had no fingers,  
And hose of Highland clans;  
There were petticoats from Paris  
And Pekin's painted fans.

Our fingers flew at random  
Like bees at a flower stall,  
And we found that gown of grandma's  
That she wore at the governor's ball.

We carried it down from the garret,  
The Florentine flounces set;  
And we made our grandma show us  
How she danced the minuet.

Oh, grandma's frugal minded,  
And sometimes her foot goes down,  
But her riches she puts in the rag bag  
When we are coming to town.

## THE FIRST SNOW STORM

THE very first snow of the year, Mama,  
And the drifts must be ten feet high;  
So I've come home to get dry, Mama,  
And this is the reason why:

We were on our way from school, Mama,  
Betty and Margie and Nan,  
When someone gave us a terrible push  
And into a drift we ran.

And we sat down in the snow, Mama,  
It wasn't as cold as you'd think;  
And we thought we would sit for a while, Mama.  
And we did, till we grew quite pink.

I feel that my shoes are wet, Mama,  
And I fear the same for my hose:  
And I fancy I'm rather damp, Mama.  
Around in my underclothes.

## SUFFERING

SAT down on a bumble bee  
In Mrs. Jackson's yard.

I sat down on a bumble bee:  
The bee stung good and hard.

I sat down on a bumble bee  
For just the briefest spell,  
And I had only muslin on,  
As any one could tell.

I sat down on a bumble bee,  
But I arose again;  
And now I know the tenseness of  
Humiliating pain.

## THE MAP MAKERS

THERE was a man who made a map  
    Of all you see at night;  
He made the moon and all the stars  
    And comets in their flight.

He worked for twenty years or more  
    And extra ink he bought,  
And then he mapped the Milky Way  
    As sort of an afterthought.

I read the story to Margaret,  
    She said that it must be true,  
For she herself could draw a map  
    Of Ocean avenue.

She made a dot for Prospect Park,  
    A blot for Sheepshead Bay,  
And then she ruled a line between  
    To show the right of way.

It took her just five minutes just,  
    But I have my private fears,  
That it isn't quite up to the moon-man's map,  
    For it never took twenty years.

## DIANA

DIANA, out of Italy, my sister's protégée,  
She came to us, with letters, for a little summer stay.

Diana, she was beautiful, and yet she made me laugh—  
Forever and forever taking one eternal bath.

She had lost her bow and arrow, she had lost her  
lingerie,  
But she was far from Venice and my sister's protégée.

And because of her distinction, and the wonder of  
design,  
Her color and her contour, surpassing any line,

I braved a frowning family, I offered her my best,  
And worshipped her in silence as my sister's chosen  
guest.

As the flowers seek the sunlight, as the birds adore the  
air,  
So Diana loved the water, loved to comb her Titian  
hair.

The neighbors talked of nothing but my sister Mary's  
taste—  
Of vagaries and vanities, and time that went to waste.

But when my sister came at last to claim our protégée,  
I was her only confidante, and comfort's only ray;

I was her only confidante in all the good old town,  
And she whispered: "Our Diana never owned a dress-  
ing gown;

"Never owned a beaded bodice, never owned a veil of  
tulle;

"Her gowns are made from sparkles of the waters of a  
pool;

"And those who cry for draperies, arouse the gods of  
wrath,

"For the gods possess their copies of 'Diana at the  
Bath!'"

## THE READING BOY

HE is carved in alabaster, he is called the Reading Boy,  
A cross-legged little pagan, pondering o'er the Siege of  
Troy;  
He's a miniature Adonis, with a bandeau round his  
head,  
And he's reading late and early when he ought to be  
in bed.

He cons an ancient manuscript, he scanneth as a sage,  
But with all his mighty reading, never yet hath turned  
a page;  
Never alabaster side glance at the turtle in the bowl,  
Never alabaster wiggle, 'though I know he has a soul.

I have watched him late and early, just an image out of  
Rome,  
And politely offered bookmarks to divert him from that  
tome;  
Yea, with aggravating gestures sought to turn aside his  
face,  
But not for pots of honey could you make him lose his  
place.

There he sits in sweet perfection that the chisel did  
unveil,  
With the rapture of an angel up against a lively tale.  
But I'd give an old maid's ransom, just to see that little  
wretch,  
Discard that Trojan magazine, and give a real good  
stretch.

## THE BATTLE ON THE FLOOR

My father was a soldier, so  
Some nights he talks of war;  
He tells of guns at "action right,"—  
The battlefield's the floor.

He says: "My little daughter Nan,  
"There's art in every fight,  
"So push the chairs and rugs around  
"And set the battle right.

"Put down the vase and candlesticks,  
"And throw the books around—  
"We want to show a town in France,  
"With shell-holes in the ground.

"Here's infantry and batteries,  
"And outposts, out before;  
"That piece of string will do for wires  
"Laid by the Signal Corps.

"The enemy's upon the rug,  
"We've fathomed their design;  
"So now we'll bring the doughboys up  
"And charge the whole darn line."

The captains, on the carpet, shout—  
"Reserves are back too far"—  
But the guns go into action with  
The smoke of Pa's cigar.

Then Ma gets mad, and says that Pa  
Was shell-shocked once in War,  
Or else he wouldn't want to play  
At battles on the floor.

She says that war is bad enough,  
And pretty rough, to boot,  
Without a battlefield at home,  
Or teaching girls to shoot.

Then Pa, he stops the battle, and  
We put things in their place;  
We know when we have fought enough,  
By the look on Mother's face.

But I'd just as soon be shell-shocked some,  
To know what father knows;  
I'd just as soon stay out at night—  
In France—and wet my clothes,

For I'd like to see a battle fierce,  
With star shells up at night,  
With regiments upon the move,  
And guns at "action right."

With cunning ammunition mules  
A-trotting to and fro,  
And personal friends a-shouting in  
The dark, "Let's go."

I think that Father's quite correct  
Describing things to me,  
And all that war in rainy France  
That lies across the sea;

For Father feels that every girl  
Should have some nerve and tone,  
And know just how to manage in  
A battle all her own.

## MID-DAY AT TRINITY

THE pigeons perch on Trinity,  
From cowls of saints they croon;  
In pious patience preen their wings  
Till Trinity strikes noon.

They make their vows to visions fair,  
The maids with mid-day smiles;  
They wait their own communion sweet—  
The crumbs along the aisles.

And presently from Wall Street strolls  
A princess past a gate;  
She pries apart a paper box  
As if she scarce could wait.

She sinks upon an old settee,  
Her luncheon in her lap;  
And other maidens follow her—  
A score or more, mayhap.

The pigeons peer from pinnacles,  
They see their tables spread;  
The sugar and the spices strewn,  
The crusts of creamy bread.

The saints upon the walls maintain  
Their attitudes benign;  
But conquered by confusing quests,  
The doves drift down to dine.

## CASTLE “BILL”

Down on Gov’nors Island,  
Ivy etched and chill,  
Hollow as a halo,  
There is Castle “Bill.”

Once the pride of outfits—  
Prisoners under guard,  
Form for evening roll-call  
In the castle yard.

Sentries with their side arms,  
Counting, one by one,  
While the twilight tarries  
For the sunset gun.

Miles away the music  
Soundeth at parade  
Chanting of Cochita,  
Filipino maid;

Chanting of Cochita  
Of Corregidor;  
Piping of the palm trees  
'Long Lunetta shore.

Dusty gunners listen,  
Lead and chain and wheel;  
Long ago Manila  
Held them all to heel;

Boys from all battalions,  
Saberless and still,  
Waiting on a sunset—  
Down in Castle “Bill.”

## CASTLE WILLIAM

WHERE Buttermilk Channel doth seek to beguile  
Diffident margins of Governor's Isle,

There is a fortress all bastioned and chill,  
Known to the army as old "Castle Bill."

There are occasions when soldiers may smile;  
Not in that castle on Governor's Isle;

Not in the cloisters where sentries abound;  
Not where a gun butt leaps up from the ground.

Oh! There are many—the old cannoneers,  
Infantry sergeants and grave grenadiers;

They have gone onward to zones of desire,  
Scorning all theories of musketry fire;

They have advanced to civilian vales,  
Building new barracks for sweet nightingales.

Yet they revert in their leisure sedate,  
Seeing in visions that old castle gate;

Still they remember their days in the mill—  
Down in the casemates of old "Castle Bill."

## THE ROLL OF THE ROSES

We called the roll of the roses  
And all of the front rank red,  
Were present and ready for duty,  
To serve with the living or dead.

We called the roll of the roses,  
But where were the yellow and white?  
With the troubadours on a terrace—  
Somewhere secure in the night.

We break no pledge to the poppies  
Or the culls of a country lane;  
Our own were alone in denying  
The levies we sought in vain.

Now who shall match us a color  
In the talk of a kinship fair,  
When none of the white or the yellow,  
But only the red were there.

We called the roll of the roses  
On the field where the roses fell;  
And a distant down made answer  
With a troubadour tolling a bell.

## THE GOSSIP

THE rose bud that grew by the settle,  
    Bowed low to the gossiping thrusts;  
The poet was praising the nettle,  
    The nettle that nobody trusts.

The pansies were painted in postures,  
    The poppies have stood on their toes;  
But long before mention of Moses  
    Her rivals have flouted the rose.

Oh! Sweetness a-sway by the settle,  
    Be still on thy beautiful stem;  
For love never clung to the nettle—  
    The nettle that burns to condemn.

Fear not for a moment's defection,  
    Though pansies and poppies may pose;  
For after a bit of reflection  
    The rover returns to the rose.

## TO-MORROW

THE sun shall shine in ages yet to be,  
The musing moon illumine pastures dim,  
And afterward a new nativity  
For all who slept the dreamless interim.

The starry brocade of the summer night  
Is linked to us as part of our estate;  
And every bee that wings its sidelong flight  
Assurance of a sweeter, fairer fate.

The blazoned humming-bird hath made it plain—  
It seeks ravines where wildings wreath each wall;  
And there succeeding broods are marked again  
By rainbows o'er a rambling waterfall.

When you return, the youngest of the seers,  
Released from fetters of ancestral pose,  
There will be beauty waiting down the year—  
Revisions of the ruby and the rose.

## THE ROSE OF REST

FROM the water-gate of Pekin, where the latticed  
lanterns glow,  
Eastward to the Cherry Gardens in the heart of Tokio,

There is none who may outrank her, none who answers  
love's behest,  
None of all my seven daughters like the little Rose of  
Rest.

Her eyes are questing colors, matchless mirrors of de-  
light,  
The turquoise dawn of China and the duskiness of  
night.

Her lips are pouting poppies by love's tender tempests  
blown,  
They tremble with the secrets only Buddha could have  
known.

She cometh in the twilight with the tamarinds and tea;  
She kneeleth near to serve me in the sweet obscurity.

She sayeth not a single word, but ever I am blest,  
And I fall asleep caressing her, the little Rose of Rest.

## THE SYMBOLS

THE sign work of the Orient it runneth up and down,  
The Talmud stalks from right to left, a rabbi in a  
gown;

The Roman rolls from left to right from Maytime  
unto May,  
But the gods shake up their symbols in an absent-  
minded way.

Their language runs to circles like the language of the  
eyes,  
Emphasized by strange dilations and with little panting  
sighs.

There are symbols set as signals for unbarricaded lips,  
Emblems manifesting merits thrilling to the finger tips.

The very serpents bite their tails; the bees forget to  
sting,  
For a language so celestial setteth up a wondering.

And the touch of absent-mindedness is more than any  
line,  
Since direction counts as nothing when the gods set up  
a sign.

## THE SALAMANDER ISLES

SNARING lights surmount the sand-dunes of the Salamander Isles;

The chime buoys chant new tunes each tide, false soundings run for miles.

And yet, for lures like these we set such sail as we could make;

We steered by stars that sorrowed, with the moonlight in our wake.

We dipped or rose supremely as we shook our free-board clear;

We clung, but smiled serenely when the head seas swept our gear.

We were captives of the currents, we were harried by the flaw,

Or the red mists from the marshes mocked the navigator's law.

Glimpsed we evanescent channels, marked by flares upon a wreck,

But the channels shoaled to shallows ere the tops could hail the deck.

Yet we won to realization that the ports long sought in vain,

Were illusive as the May moths or the madrigals of Spain;

And that only charts from China, drawn by wizards  
full of wiles,  
Would give the proper bearings for the Salamander  
Isles.

## THE CHESS GAME

My king, my queen, the castles twain, each bishop, pawn  
and knight,

I led them into battle by the flick'ring candle light.

I led them into combat 'gainst a genius at the game,  
And the candles all were laughing as I sought to hide  
my shame.

But the little silver chessmen that were wrought in  
Samarcand

Caught the spirit of crusaders there upon the teakwood  
stand.

The warriors all murmured, while the monarch moved  
to lean

And voice his plan of action to his understanding queen:

“For the sake of all the trumpeters who had to sound  
retreat—

For the sake of all beginners who have gone down to  
defeat;

“We will fight, no human guiding, for a lovely lady's  
fame,

And we'll run our counter-gambit to a checkmate in the  
game.”

Oh, the glory of that battle, thunder marching in the  
ranks;

The castles staunchly standing, and the proud pawns on  
the flanks.

The queen with her litter and the king upon the right  
Spurred on each knight and bishop in the fury of the  
fight;

'Mid the stone piles of his slingers surged my men of  
Samarcand,  
And we conquered our opponent on that polished teak-  
wood stand.

Thus reality was riven by the wisdom of a wraith,  
By the images inanimate that fought for love and  
faith;

By the images inanimate that come from Samarcand  
To show their knightly courtesy upon a teakwood  
stand.

## THE DINOSAURS' EGGS

ONE morn in old Mongolia,  
In Asia's arid lands,  
Men found the eggs of dinosaurs  
Upon the Gobi sands.

The one-time myths in miniature,  
The seeds that turned to stone,  
The mirage of forgotten things  
Upon the sands were strown.

Fate left them to strange lassitudes,  
The lonely and the still,  
That could have tusked creation's flanks  
But for some sudden chill.

The roses pined in weary wastes  
Yet won to garden wall;  
The honey-loving humming-birds  
Outlived a waterfall;

The does a-down the centuries  
Soft nosed each little fawn;  
The robin's breast was o'er her brood,  
All gentle things were born.

With sweet significance the bowers  
Gave beckonings and smiles,  
And then came Eden's wistful mates  
To walk in Eden's aisles.

But in the Gobi solitudes,  
The tombs time left unlatched—  
There lay in wind-blown shrouds of sand  
The eggs that never hatched.

## THE FIRST STORY

MID seaweed on a sultry strand, ten thousand years ago,  
A sun-burned baby sprawling lay, a-playing with his  
toe.

The babe was dreaming of the day that he might swing  
a club,

When lo! He saw a fishy thing, a-squirming in the  
mud.

The creature was an octopus, and dangerous to pat,  
But the prehistoric infant never stopped to think of  
that.

The baby's fingernails were sharp, his appetite was  
prime,

He clutched that deep-sea monster, for 'twas nearing  
supper-time.

Oh! Suddenly, from out the pulp a fluid black did  
flow,

'Twas flavored like a barberry wine and gave a sort of  
glow;

It squirted in the baby's eyes; it made him gasp and  
blink,

But to that octopus he held, and drank up all the ink.

The ink was in the baby—he was bound to write a tale;  
So he wrote the first of stories with his little fingernail.

## THE THREE-CORNERED LOT

SAID the farmer to his daughter: "When I die, as like  
as not,  
I'll leave to you the title to the old three-cornered lot.

" 'Tis the vale beyond the pastures, never any good to  
me,  
With the huckleberry bushes and the silver maple-tree.

"Fair scenery for song birds, but too small to cultivate;  
Yet there's a wall around it, like a foolish man's estate."

Fell a blight upon the corn fields; stood an empty barn  
and cot;  
The farmer's holdings dwindled to the old three-  
cornered lot.

He saw his home dismantled; learned that permanence,  
alas,  
Is the portrait of a swallow painted on the shadow  
grass.

Came his daughter as a seeress, and she said: "As like  
as not,  
I'm giving back the title to the old three-cornered lot.

" 'Tis just a bit of scenery too sweet to cultivate,  
Yet there's a wall around it, like a nobleman's estate;

“There are huckleberry bushes and a length of garden  
loam,  
And the stone walls of the foolish man wherewith to  
build a home.”

## THE HISTORY OF HONEY

“THE History of Honey”—by an aged mandarin,  
And I bought it for the pictures of the burnished bees  
therein.

For the dainty revelations, masquerading up and down,  
For the odor of the sandalwood that talked of Chinatown.

According to the mandarin, the Oriental bees  
Were the first to hoard their honey in the mountain  
cavities.

In the ages of antiquity, each summer afternoon,  
They flew in golden convoys to the mountains of the  
moon.

And there, in caves by cataracts, where nothing could  
annoy,  
Poured gallons in the caverns when Confucius was a  
boy.

Many mountains bulged with honey stored before the  
days of Ming,  
From each crevice dripped the essence of a very  
precious thing.

Imprisoned in this honey, aging as the æons wane,  
Are the souls of all the flowers, waiting to be born  
again:

Every lotus, every poppy, every tulip, every rose.  
And those who sip the honey slip beyond all human  
woes,

Dream again of youth's digressions, index misty ways  
of joy,  
Turn unto the pagan pastimes of Confucius—as a boy.

Doubtless there are yet secreted some divine distilleries  
Overflowing with the wonder worth a dozen dynasties.

But the mandarin, he made no map, contented in old  
age  
To draw the clinging love scenes of the bees on every  
page.

There he found an inspiration antedating all the Mings,  
And he got the ancient essence of the very sweetest  
things.

## THE HISTORY OF PAINTING

A shadow and reflection quarreled once upon a time,  
Disputing o'er the setting for a woodland pantomime.

One claimed that color dominates and waved to  
heaven's blue;  
The other held that outline makes an angel worth the  
view.

The tumult shook the thrushes' nests, the fledglings  
joined their cries;  
Forth came the fauns from forest gloom with wistful  
enterprise.

Reflection flung her florid robes o'er gneiss and  
dolomite;  
The shadow bowed to everything that stood within the  
light.

But color lacked the candor and the certainty divine;  
The shadow clung forever to the flatness of a line.

Spake suddenly an oracle, gray-feathered, blindly wise:  
"The absence of the sunlight worketh wonders in the  
eyes;

"For light and shades are synonyms of things that stand  
apart  
Till love creates a question and a longing in each heart."

The fledglings caught the utterance, the fauns were  
there to see;  
They stayed to watch a shadow kiss a rose light reck-  
lessly.

Thereafter there was artistry, the brooks began to paint;  
The ferns were willing models and the lilacs lost re-  
straint;

The lakes were filled with sunsets and the birth-marked  
butterflies  
On balanced wings were cruising 'cross the mirrors of  
the skies.

The granite learned to glisten and the rocks that held  
the rain  
Awoke to truer technique, tempting visions back again.

Thus from a bickering were born the painter's art and  
lore  
That beauty might be glorified by love forever more.

## THE ROAD TO ROSLYN

UPON the road to Roslyn Town,  
The road that skirts the bay;  
Upon the road to Roslyn Town,  
Upon a summer's day,

I met a dark-haired Gypsy girl,  
'Twas afternoon, and late;  
With haunting eyes she halted me  
By Thomas Clapham's gate.

She was bent upon the business of  
A very ancient race;  
But no mercenary motive marred  
That sombre Gypsy face.

“Oh, maiden beautiful,” she said,  
“Let’s tarry on the green—  
What luck upon the Roslyn Road  
To meet a Gypsy queen.”

With amber eyes she read my palm,  
Then raised them to a stare,  
“You wed for love, for wealth, for power,  
And thrice three sons will bear.”

She asked me for a silver piece,  
The amber eyeballs glowed;  
I gave her all the change I had,  
Upon the Roslyn Road.

She begged from me my hosiery,  
My gloves, and named my beau;  
She slipped the Solway sandals from  
The infantry below;

She got from me my garnet ring,  
She cozened off my gown;  
She left me like Godiva on  
The Road to Roslyn Town.

Oh, I went home across the lots  
In the gloaming and in tears,  
But she didn't get my earrings, for  
The bobbed hair hid my ears.

## THE ARMY LAUNDRESS

BESIDE a somber sally port upon a bastioned isle  
There dwells a bare-armed laundry girl to serve the  
rank and file.

Her name is Sheila Shanahan, she reigns in Soap Suds  
Row,  
The lane that won to luster in the army long ago.

She bendeth o'er a wash tub while the sentries walk the  
walls,  
And pyramids are builded from the brooding cannon  
balls.

She elevates an army post without the least design,  
The belle of all the barracks hanging clothes upon a  
line.

Fate ransacked ancient reveries to dower youth's desire,  
Unrolled the scrolls of Sidon and the tapestries of  
Tyre;

She pilfered from Parnassus till the gods ran to and  
fro.

Then gave her golden gleanings to the girl in Soap  
Suds Row.

Oh, there are many lovers of sweet Sheila Shanahan,  
The seagulls and the sundown breeze upon the bar-  
bican;

The pigeons on the parapets, the disappearing guns,  
The sign-boards on the magazines, the Colonel's  
romped sons,

And while the sunset tarrieth and while an army waits,  
The children from the post school storm the dusty bar-  
rack gates;

They wander into Soap Suds Row with laughter in the  
van—

The bravest of the cavaliers of Sheila Shanahan.

## REGINA MENDOSEN

I'M Regina Mendosena, queen of all of Shanty Town;  
Just behold me in me sport dress with me stockings  
hanging down;

Just behold me with me sceptre, Mither Grady's wash  
ing stick,  
A sunflower for a coronet—me foot upon a brick.

I'm Regina Mendosena, and I'm Irish if you please,  
Me mither was an actress and me faither sailed the seas;

And for culture and for travel, it was hard to beat the  
pair—

I'm Regina Mendosena and 'tis me that is their heir.

They made me Queen of Ireland when mither flew the  
town;

They gave me Madden's old shebang when faither's  
ship went down;

They gave me Crazy Mary's goats when Crazy Mary  
died,

And they're going to kape me going till I gits to be a  
bride.

I'm Regina Mendosena, queen of all of Shanty Town,  
Me pus'nal friends admiring all the contour of me  
gown;

Me pus'nal friends remarking on the brownness of me  
eyes,  
I'm Regina Mendosena—but I wonder if they lies?

I'm Regina Mendosena, and 'tis when to Mass I go,  
I gown meself discreetly with me braidings in a bow;

I'm Regina Mendosena, I'm the same and not the same,  
For I lay aside me titles and me very ancient name.

## THE GIRL FROM SOAP SUDS ROW

Oh! Mistress Margaret Esther Snow,  
She lived way down in Soap Suds Row;  
She came to school in a gingham frock,  
With breakfast stains upon her smock.

Oh! Mistress Margaret Esther Snow  
Is rather poor as we all know;  
Her socks are a most unusual sight,  
And her shoes are never quite watertight.

She missed her lessons most every day;  
She seemed too sad to want to play;  
So Miss McHugh, our teacher grave,  
Said she was meeker than any slave.

She so admonished poor Mistress Snow,  
That the little girl longed for Soap Suds Row;  
And lastly, the teacher, to make her bright,  
Gave her a piece to learn to recite.

For three whole days we didn't know  
The piece she had given to Mistress Snow;  
But on Monday morning Miss McHugh  
Said: "Margaret will speak for 2-A-2."

Then Mistress Margaret Esther wailed,  
And all of us girls in sympathy paled;  
But all of a sudden she walked right out,  
She tossed her head as she turned about.

She made a most wonderful Grecian bow  
That someone had taught her in Soap Suds Row;  
Her eyes were shining—she wasn't afraid,  
And she spoke “The Charge of the Light Brigade.”

Did she speak that piece? Well, I guess she did.  
'Twas a fight to a finish—she took off the lid;  
The up-stairs classes—they heard her shout,  
And the principal came to see what 'twas about.

But Mistress Margaret—she never stayed—  
She gave us the whole of “The Light Brigade.”  
You could smell the smoke, you could see each gun;  
You could hear the galloping horses run.

And we sat stunned in the 2-A-2  
When we saw what Soap Suds Row could do;  
For she told of the battle and everything done,  
With everyone dead and the glory won.

Sometimes her voice was like sugar plums,  
And then it shook with the noise of drums;  
And the girls upstairs, they thought 'twas true  
That there was a fight in the 2-A-2.

Well, when it was over, so sweet was her face  
That she seemed as if dressed in velvet and lace;  
And she made that wonderful bow once more,  
Till her rather scant petticoat touched the floor.

We clapped our hands, and we made them smart,  
And we were happy around the heart,  
For the way that the teachers crowded in  
Added a lot to the lovely din.

Poor Miss McHugh was pleased till she cried,  
While the 2-A-2 just swelled with pride;  
And so excited was Miss McHugh  
That she didn't know just the thing to do.

But she kissed our beauty of Soap Suds Row,  
Till Margaret's face was all aglow;  
She mentioned that Marge was a human lute—  
She was glad that her bread was bearing fruit.

Then the principal said in his stately way  
That for 1-3-9 'twas a very proud day,  
And that close alignment to classroom rules  
Made genius flourish in public schools.

But somehow the girls in the 2-A-2,  
They get things just a bit askew; •  
And they surmise that Mistress Snow  
Found most of her genius in Soap Suds Row.

## EVA

Eva, the first of the fair ones,  
Taught all her daughters to paint;  
Using indelible colors,  
Seeress and siren and saint.

Banished them all to the brook brims,  
There in benign ambuscade,  
Taught them the art of portraying  
Beauty that never may fade.

Voiced she the values of shadows  
Moored to the moss-mantled crags;  
Primed them to pose by the dwarf palms  
And mid the cat-tails and flags.

Thus by each crevice and cavern,  
Thus in the lunettes and glades,  
There are depicted all damsels,  
Eva's most wonderful maids.

Traceries tender and dimpled,  
Intricate art of design;  
Shadowy ideals of Eden,  
Even of Eva, divine.

Breathe but a name in the bowers,  
Pour out her praise as a prayer;  
Forth from the fronds floats a presence,  
Vestured in loveliness rare.

Thus, since the first of the fair ones,  
All of the daughters of Eve,  
Portray in permanent colors,  
Making men see and believe.

## OLD MAID'S REVERIE

I'M tired of mirthless mirrors and their hostile heresies,  
Of musing in a mansion hung with mildewed memo-  
ries;

Of the silence of the stairways, of the statuary wan,  
Of the alabaster angel riding on the fountain swan;

I'm irked by isolation and the lawns kept so and so—  
I'd trade an old maid's theories for a rood of Soap  
Suds Row;

For the sunflowers and the shanties where the shadows  
sit at ease,  
For the horde of baby banshees and the swing-scarred  
apple-trees;

Therefore methinks I'll venture to a disarrayed  
domain,  
And shoonless dance the saraband in some assuaging  
lane.

No sandals wrought in Sybaris, or girdle bossed with  
gold,  
But beauty in a barefoot mood, revising edicts old.

There cupids turn the calendars to Michael Angelo,  
The goya needs no gabardine, the rose no kimono;

And I, a maiden mendicant may ask an alms, forsooth,  
As one who missed the rubrics in the litanies of youth.

## THE COMMONPLACE

By the steps of the paper-box factory,  
Or the gates where the Seraphim nod,  
In the time and the place that's appointed,  
You will meet with your commonplace god.

And then you'll be glad and forever,  
For the queens of the East and the West,  
With the sets of the Garden of Eden  
Have failed in a commonplace quest.

So to you who have dreamed in the starlight,  
And to you who have drudged in the town,  
And to you of the commonplace vision,  
With the beauty the Greeks handed down,

Doubt not that the time is appointed,  
That the chart with a quester is girt,  
But remember that star-dust is star-dust  
And ranks not the commonest dirt;

That the gods of Olympus were beggars  
Or ever they burned to create,  
And that rags ripple down into samite  
For a Venus who swings on a gate;

That the steps of the paper-box factory,  
As well as the gardens of kings,  
Are only the blue-print devices  
Of love, and the commonplace things.

## BERKLEY COMMON

SUMMER broods o'er Berkley Common, o'er the fields  
of everlasting,

And around the common cluster homes no one would  
ever rent;

The people that once lived there, long have gone to  
other places,

Dusty heirlooms in the garrets give a clue to where  
they went.

Like a manuscript, all yellow, and with many things  
deleted,

Yet a manuscript completed, with embellishments  
most rare,

Berkley Common lies forgotten, with its fields of ever-  
lasting,

And the sunlight on the windows of the empty  
houses there.

It is off the line of travel; to the present unrelated;  
Only peddlers down from Dighton go that way to  
Taunton Weir;

They haste by Berkley Common, by the fields of ever-  
lasting,

For the empty houses fill them with a feeling like to  
fear.

## CHOICE

CLOUD-MADE mountains towered,  
Beckoning to me;  
Visionary triremes  
Talked about the sea . . .

There were strings of camels  
On the Tunis sands . . .  
There were certain cities  
Holding out their hands . . .

Mine the choice that fettered  
Lips to fountain brim;  
Timed the droning transits—  
Bees in gardens dim.

Thus I pay no tribute,  
Heed no tallier's call;  
Only sound of kisses  
From a waterfall.

Only honey dripping  
In a hollow tree;  
First of hour glasses  
Keeping time for me.

Only broken whispers,  
Tracing themes unsaid;  
Soft as tread of visions  
O'er a poppy bed . . .

## THE FIRE VASE

SAID the potter to the flower pots: "It's a question of  
design—

Must I hold my hands forever from the images  
divine?"

He ran a royal pattern and he shaped a wondrous vase,  
From the peach-bloom drew his color, from the rose-  
blend drew his glaze.

Came collectors of ceramics, connoisseurs who stayed to  
yearn;

Something wonderful was hidden 'neath the cover of  
that urn.

Some said 'twas filled with roses, others wagered it  
was wine,

One said it might be empty as a part of the design.

Nearly all of the appraisers for the outside made their  
bid,

But the one who bought the beauty dreamed of what  
was 'neath the lid.

He set it on his cottage hearth, the vase beside the fire,  
And the cover rose in answer to a very old desire,

And through the peach-bloom color and the rose-blend  
of the glaze,

He saw love's lost illusions safe within the potter's vase.

## MY HUSBANDS

I HEAR my husbands marching  
The æons all adown:  
The shepherd boys and princes—  
From cavern unto crown.

I hear in soft recession  
The praise they give to me;  
I hear them chant my titles  
From all antiquity.

But never do I answer,  
I might be overheard;  
Lose Love's revised illusions  
By one unhappy word.

I sit, a silent siren,  
And count my cavaliers;  
The men I wed in wisdom,  
The boys who taught me tears.

To some I gave devotion,  
To some I kinked the knee;  
But there was one old wizard  
Who laid his spells on me.

He showed me like a master  
That one rose makes a gown;  
That looking up to Heaven  
Is merely looking down.

He marked me for the circle,  
Made magic in my eyes;  
He won me by revealing  
The truth in all his lies.

So, when I see that wizard  
Among the marchers dim,  
I make the full court curtsy  
In fealty to him.

## AFTERWORD

In a maze of contributions such as the poetry editor of a large metropolitan newspaper printing daily two or three poems receives there came to me unheralded one morning in the mail a little poem which bore the name of an author of whom I had never heard—Nathalia Crane. It was a whimsical piece of verse such as an editor rarely receives, a rhythmical, lilting production that would gladden the heart of any one. It was called *The History of Honey*. Needless to say it was accepted for publication. Subsequently others submitted by Nathalia Crane also found a place in *The Sun*.

Then followed some correspondence in regard to various other poems but a call at the office made by the author in answer to a letter about the poem *The Army Laundress* disclosed to my amazement that the writer was none other than a little girl—a shy, unassuming youngster who was as embarrassed during the interview as I was myself. For I must admit I was embarrassed—or rather taken aback.

My surprise is excusable. So many times I had received “poems” from youngsters who were careful to give their ages in addition to their names; so often I had received visits from doting parents or relatives requesting publication of verses by their children or sisters or cousins that I had never dreamed any child would ever submit any work from his or her pen without adding the words “Aged — years.” But little Nathalia was the exception—and there was nothing in her poems that I received to indicate her age.

The poems bought were accepted on their merits and on their merits alone, and many a poet of greater years and of

recognized standing would not despise being known as the author of *The Reading Boy*, *The Three-Cornered Lot* and *The Commonplace*.

Nathalia Crane is a little girl who plays with dolls and toys and Roger Jones, whom she has glorified in some of her poems, when she is not busy at a typewriter giving expression to dreams and visions. She is also an author of delightful verse who obtained wide recognition of her work not because it was written by a child but because it was in itself worth while reading. For this alone, if for nothing else, she deserves all the success that is hers, all the laurels with which her friends and readers are glad to crown her and none more than the writer of this "Afterword" who came to know Nathalia Crane through her poetry which did not disclose her years.

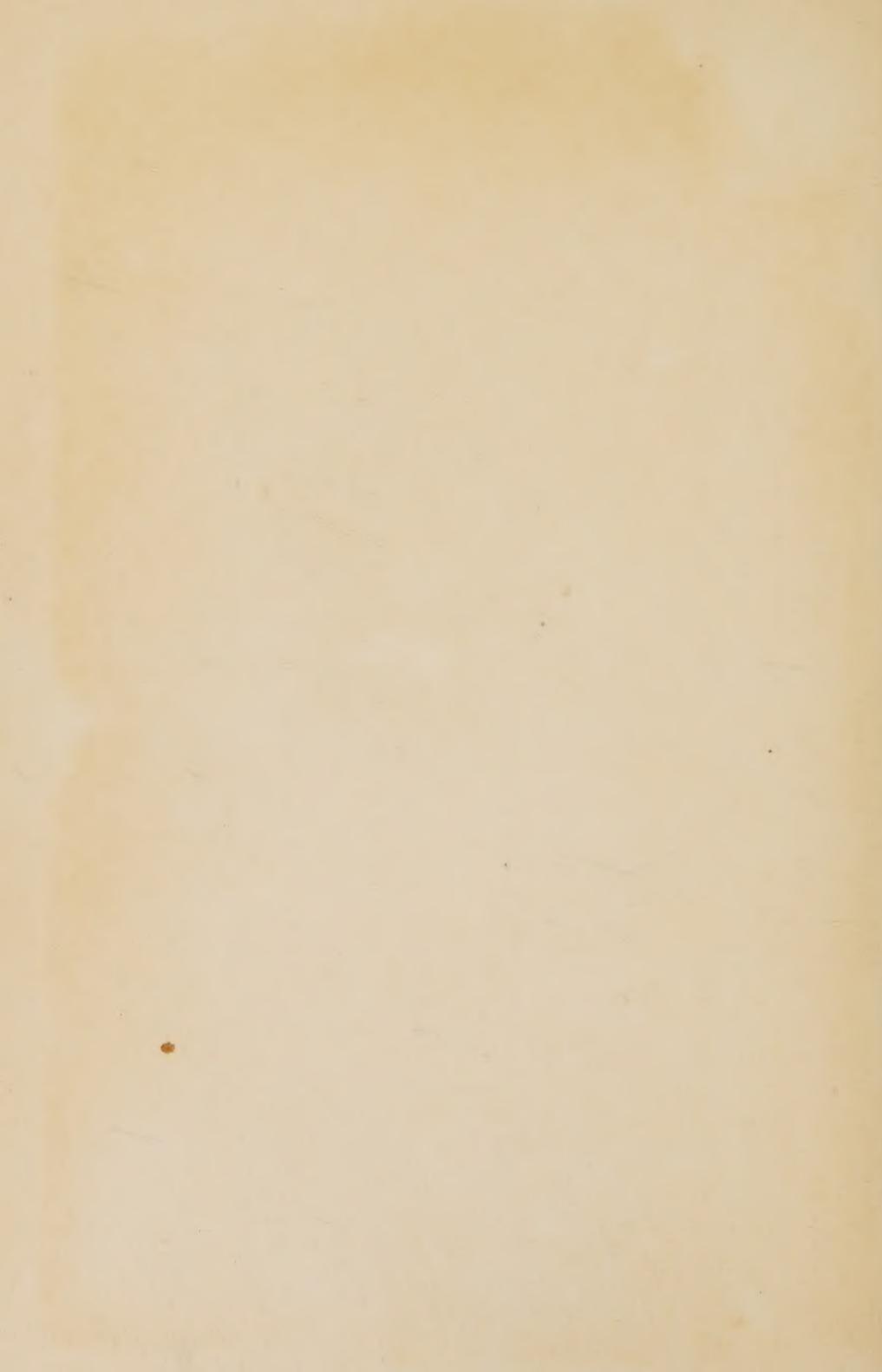
EDMUND LEAMY

*New York, May, 1924.*













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